(c) As on 31.03.2005, the Gross Non-Performing Assets of scheduled commercial banks stood at Rs. 59,516 crore, which was 5.2% of gross bank credit.

Redesigning of Service Tax Net

1552. SHRI UDAY PRATAP SINGH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal to redesign Service Tax net for the year 2006-07; and

(b) if so, the services which are being considered to be brought under Income-tax net?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (b) Service tax is leviable under the provisions of Chapter V of the Finance Act, 1994. The proposals of the Government to extend the service tax net are contained in clause 68 of the Finance Bill, 2006, which has been introduced by Finance Minister in Lok Sabha on 28th February, 2006.

Opening of Bank Branches in Pakistan

†1553. SHRI UDAY PTATAP SINGH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether State Bank of India and Punjab National Bank have asked for permission from Government to open their branches in Pakistan; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the names of the countries wherein branches of these banks have been opened?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has received request from State Bank of India (SBI) and Bank of India (BOI) to open two branches each in Pakistan. Punjab National Bank (PNB) has also evinced interest in opening two branches in Pakistan. As on 28th February, 2006, one branches of PNB is functioning in Afghanistan and a total of 25 branches of SBI are functioning abroad-one each in Australia, Bahamas Island, Bahrain, Belgium, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Maldives Islands, Singapore, South Africa and Sultanate of Oman, two branches in Japan and three branches each in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, UK and USA.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.